



Director's Desk

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Acting Director

This issue of *The Pulse* is full of celebrations. First, we recently had a chance to celebrate our amazingly talented nurses during Nurses Week. Our nursing staff often spend the most time with our patients, walking with them through all aspects of their visit or stay with us. I am so appreciative of their dedication to their work, of their sensitivity to our patients, and how they so often are a leader in modeling what multidisciplinary care looks like. Congratulations to all the Nurse of the Year winners and a huge thank you to all the RNs, LVNs, nursing attendants, nursing instructors, clinical nursing specialists, nurse supervisors and managers and all other nursing staff who work tirelessly every day for our patients.

Other recent award winners that deserve our recognition are DHS' Volunteers of the Year and

the five project teams that recently won an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). Each in their own way, these winners enhance the care experience of our patients and strengthen the reputation of DHS in our broader community. I'm very proud of their accomplishments.

Congratulations also to all those who assisted in our most recent successful IT roll-outs: "EPCS" (Electronic Prescribing of Controlled Substances) and "Tele-tracking." EPCS, now available system-wide, is a key part of our overall opiate strategy and will help us better understand and manage how we help our patients experiencing pain. Tele-tracking is currently live at LAC+USC but will be rolled out system-wide over the coming months – as described on page 4, this tool will help us better manage the throughput of our patients' hospital stay. The reduction in wait times was almost immediate and is truly impressive!

I hope you feel a sense of excitement as you read through the articles included here. We are all a part of a team that is doing incredible work in the lives of our patients every day. May you find joy and satisfaction in all you do.

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Nurses celebrated during recognition week



Nurses across Los Angeles County departments were recognized by the Board of Supervisors on May 8 at the Hall of Administration.

By Anna Veerathappa, RN

Los Angeles County recognized nurses for their Nursing Professional Practice during National Nurses' Week 2018. Nurse of the Year Awards were presented to 13 outstanding nurses from all County Departments: Department of Public Health, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Mental Health, LA County Fire Department and the Department of Health Services: LAC+USC Medical Center, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Olive View-UCLA Medical Center, Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, Emergency Medical Services, Juvenile Court Health Services, Ambulatory Care Network, Managed Care Services and Correctional Health Services.

The County held its annual Nurse Recognition Event on Monday, May 7, with a continuing education conference on Scholar- (See 'NURSES' on 2nd page)



Violeta Perez, RN, DHS "Nurse of the Year" (center), is flanked by Sue Currin, RN, DHS Chief Nursing Officer and Director and Office of Nursing Affairs (left), and Christina Ghaly, MD, DHS Interim Director (right).

(‘NURSES’)



ship, Evidence-Based Practice and Leadership: The Imperative for DHS Nursing and Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center: Journey to Excellence and Professional Practice Model. The conference was well attended with over 235 participants at the California Endowment.

The speakers were Karen L Hill, MSN, ANP-C, PhD, with a presentation on “Scholarship, Evidence-Based Practice and Leadership.” She was followed by Aries Limbaga, RN, CPRN, AGNP, MBA, DNP, Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Interim CEO, with a presentation on “Rancho Los Amigos’ Journey to Excellence.” The final speaker was Joseph Tadeo, RN, CNS, PHNA-BC, MPH, DNP, Magnet Program Director, with a presentation on “Rancho Los Amigos’ Professional Practice Model.”

A panel discussion led by Michelle Sterling, RN, CNS-BC, DNP, Rancho’s Chief Nursing Officer, followed the presentations. Based on the discussions and conference evaluations, our nursing staff is committed to supporting the department as we move forward with Nursing Professional Practice and the County mission.

The Board of Supervisors honored County nurses for their professionalism, dedication and commitment to provide quality care to patients. On Tuesday, May 8, these 13 outstanding nurses each received a scroll from the Board at the Hall of Administration. On behalf of the patients we serve, we salute and thank all L.A. County nurses!

DHS adopts electronic prescribing for opioids

By Mindy Aisen, MD

Electronic Prescription of Controlled Substances (EPCS) is a paperless method for prescribing medications designated as ‘controlled’ by the Federal Government, due to their addictive potential. Such medications include opioids and certain sedatives. The prescriber enters medication information directly into the individual patient’s electronic health record and the information is securely transmitted to the dispensing pharmacy.

EPCS removes paper from the prescribing process. Paper prescription pads have unfortunately, and not infrequently, been stolen and used to illegally obtain controlled drugs from unwitting pharmacies; EPCS avoids this potential for illegal diversion of prescription pads. In addition, EPCS provides a permanent record of all controlled substances prescribed in the patient’s electronic health record, so all clinicians caring for the patient have the ability to see what has been provided to the patient.

EPCS promotes better stewardship of controlled substances by providing a complete and timely record of all potentially addictive agents provided to the patient, allowing coordination of care among different clinicians providing care. It also allows for

oversight of prescribing patterns by quality and safety staff and coaching of prescribers to stop addiction before it starts.

Opioid Prescribing Background

In the late 20th Century, prescribing patterns for controlled substances in the U.S. were guided by widely held attitudes among clinicians that excellent care meant eradication of pain, and the addicting potential of controlled substances was not as important as patient comfort. This led to substantial numbers of patients receiving chronic opioids and sedatives for chronic non-acute, non-cancer pain.

This pattern had also developed within DHS, and in 2012, one of our hospitals was compelled to initiate a comprehensive program for monitoring opioid/sedative overuse after three deaths and two “near misses” occurred.

Pain Advisory Workgroups

A local, multidisciplinary Pain Advisory Workgroup was created to promote the safety of patients, educate patients and providers about the dangers of chronic opioid use, and establish a

(See ‘EPCS’ on 3rd page)

DHS recognized for achievement and innovation

By Michael Wilson

Five DHS initiatives have earned Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that improve services for county residents.

An effort led by Gerardo Pinedo to shred over 3 million paper records and modernize medical record management leading to significant cost savings and reduced liability exposure was recognized. A second award went to an effort (also led by Gerardo Pinedo) to hire veterans in the department’s Health Information Management (HIM) division that eliminated reliance on costly personnel contracts and created career paths for over 35 vets.

Dr. Jagruti Shukla and her team were recognized for addressing social determinants of health in primary care homes at LAC+USC Medical Center. The Integrated Behavioral Health program fills gaps in the availability of mental health and social services by integrating those services together into the primary care clinic. The model demonstrated improvement in patients’ mental health (decreased depression severity) and chronic medical conditions (improved diabetes control and blood pressure control).

A specialty team led by Dr. Monica Soni also earned NACo’s attention for the invention and implementation of Expected Practices (EPs) that have transformed care delivery. EPs are standard approaches to care developed by consensus and based on clinical evidence. DHS now has 190 EPs on topics ranging from cancer screening to safe use of opioids to obesity prevention that are

downloaded by providers over 3,000 times per month.

Rounding out the awards, a My Health LA pharmacy initiative led Amy Luftig Viste established a robust retail and 340B pharmacy network that expanded 24/7 access for medications, supported patient compliance with an approved formulary, provided up-to-date pharmaceutical data on enrollees, and created a low-cost prescription distribution mechanism for the uninsured.

NACo President Roy Charles Brooks said, “Counties seize opportunities to deliver services more efficiently and build stronger communities every day. Achievement Award-winning programs are examples for counties that are determined to enhance services for our residents.”

Nationally, awards are given in 18 distinct categories that reflect the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. The categories include children and youth, criminal justice, county administration, information technology, health, and civic engagement.

NACo will recognize county awardees at its 2018 Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee in July.



(‘EPCS’)

set of non-opioid medication and non-pharmacological pain relief interventions. From 2013-2017, DHS sought to change the culture of prescribers, helping them understand that promoting health was at times inconsistent with abolishing all chronic discomfort.

The DHS Chronic Non-Cancer Pain Work Group (CNCPWG) was established, comprised of clinicians from multiple disciplines and all DHS facilities. The goal is to develop Expected Practices (EPs) for all DHS prescribers for preventing addiction before it starts, tapering opioids, using non-opioid methods for managing pain, and providing guidance for communication with patients. The Chronic Non-Cancer Pain e-Consult portal, staffed by members of the CNCPWG, was also created to provide one on one coaching to clinicians and disseminate EPs.

A series of workshops is now underway to train clinicians in the practice of non-pharmacological pain treatments. In addition, classes in meditation, distraction, progressive muscle relaxation are available in Wellness Centers across DHS.



A multidisciplinary team across DHS, including IT, clinical informatics, credentialing staff offices, facility and departmental administration, pharmacy and executive leadership led implementation of EPCS. A few of those individuals are pictured left to right (front row): Genevieve Rocillo, Leland Chew, Davis Truong, Sherrie Vasquez, Jaime Alas, and Rajesh Prabhu; (back row): Paul Fu, Jr., Phillip Gruber, Robin Watson, and Isaak Martinez.

EPCS Rollout

Late last year, DHS clinicians and Health Information Technology (HIT) staff began to roll out EPCS. This required changes in work flow, including the need for prescribers to learn to use two-factor authentication on personal 'smart phone' devices. As with any change, there were concerns, questions and objections. Support and education was provided and EPCS went “live” on time, on budget, and with surprisingly positive reactions from prescribers.

The majority of prescribers in DHS are now successfully prescribing exclusively electronically. Although the U.S. “opioid crisis” rages, DHS has and will continue to ensure that our prescribers are providing safe pain management.

“Honestly, it’s made my life so much easier.”

“It works really well and I like clicking my watch to prescribe.”

- LAC+USC resident physicians

LAC+USC honors trauma survivors

75 trauma survivors and their families returned to LAC+USC Medical Center this month for the 11th annual Trauma Survivors’ Reunion. The program included remarks from three traumatic injury survivors, a Folklorico dance show, recognition of first responders, and presentation of gift bags. Survivor Hector Ruiz (pictured) recounted his experience in one of the hospital’s most remarkable “saves” in recent years. LAC+USC’s Hospital Emergency Response Team (HERT) was dispatched to the field in August 2017 to extract Mr. Ruiz from industrial machinery that had trapped his legs. The multidisciplinary team led by trauma surgeon Dr. Elizabeth Benjamin crawled into a small space filled with black dust to amputate both legs, free him, and rush him to the hospital operating suite. Despite his injuries, Mr. Ruiz survived and shared with participants the strength of faith and family that led him back.



Volunteer spirit shines

Magy Martinez, an adult volunteer from Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, and Uziel Angeles, a junior volunteer from LAC+USC Medical Center, were selected as “DHS’ Volunteers of the Year” at Los Angeles County’s 36th annual volunteer awards luncheon held at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on April 23. Volunteers play an essential role in our health system, supporting patient-centered care and many facets of our operations. Thanks to all of our volunteers for giving your time, energy and dedication.



New capacity management application relieves patient flow processes

By Michael Wilson

LAC+USC Medical Center has implemented a new real-time capacity management system called Teletracking which has everyone buzzing. The application is used to track the patient throughout his or her length of stay in the hospital and provides automation and transparency to the patient flow process.

Two months after a record implementation by hospital information systems and clinical leadership, LAC+USC has seen tremendous improvement in all areas of transport wait times, EVS clean times, bed assignments and wait times in the Emergency Department for beds. Patient flow runs more efficiently, and the investment is already paying dividends in improved patient experience.

The system covers all 600 beds in the facility and 62 beds at Hawkins, giving Bed Control a visualization of bed availability in real-time. Admissions requests are queued to Bed Control and beds are assigned on a clinically ready-to-move basis. This functionality has reduced bed request wait times to approximately one hour, and to under two hours from the time the bed is requested until the patient is received in the unit.

The implementation of Teletracking in the Department of Emergency Medicine (DEM) has helped the DEM take an organized, systematic approach with regards to faster admission, transportation to inpatient beds, faster completion of diagnostic testing, and improvement in the performance of ancillary staff (transporters). It has improved communication, significantly decreased the number of patients waiting for beds, and reduced average bed wait times from an average of 4-5 hours to approximately an hour and a half.

Nursing and hospital leadership can see all beds at a glance and the current census and projected census based on pending and confirmed discharges in real-time. Nursing and Patient Flow can see which beds are ready to be occupied and which ones are dirty, receiving real-time alerts for patients assigned to come to their units. This improves patient flow, creates capacity and allows for a better patient intake process.



LAC+USC clinical nursing director Valda Carter, RN, says “before Teletracking, we were trying to track down the patient by calling a transporter on the phone, which was a big waste of time. Hospital transporters now carry hand-held devices for job requests which auto tracks a patient’s movement, eliminating the need for nurses and transport staff to communicate by phone.”

Transport jobs are being assigned to the transporters’ hand-held devices based on proximity and priority, thereby reducing patient wait time for transportation, increasing inpatients getting to their appointments on time, and reducing cancelled procedures due to transportation delays.

The software has also enhanced the processes for EVS employees. Once a patient is discharged in ORCHID, a job notification is sent to the EVS employee’s handheld device, which prompts the EVS employee to accept the job, clean the room, and complete the job. This updates the bed in Teletracking as clean. “Teletracking is a valuable tool to monitor and move patients into the right beds,” adds Carter. “For hospital staff, the only downside so far is that it works too well and moves patients too fast.” LAC+USC is the first hospital to go live with the system, which will be expanded to other DHS hospitals.

Milestones



Congrats to MLK Outpatient Center employee Denise Gordon on finishing the Orange County half marathon on April 6. The OC run was the third in a series of Beach City races Denise has participated in.

Career Day for kids



The focus was on kids during “Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day” on May 1. Multiple DHS sites held events. At Health Services Administration, children visited the Board of Supervisors meeting at the Hall of Administration, the Downtown L.A. public library, and received “hands only” CPR training from Lorrie Perez, RN, MICN, with the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency. Dr. Paul Giboney spoke to the group and Donna Nagaoka and her staff held a paper airplane “performance improvement” session. By all accounts, the day was an enormous success. The kids left with useful information and a better understanding of the range of careers available to them in the future.